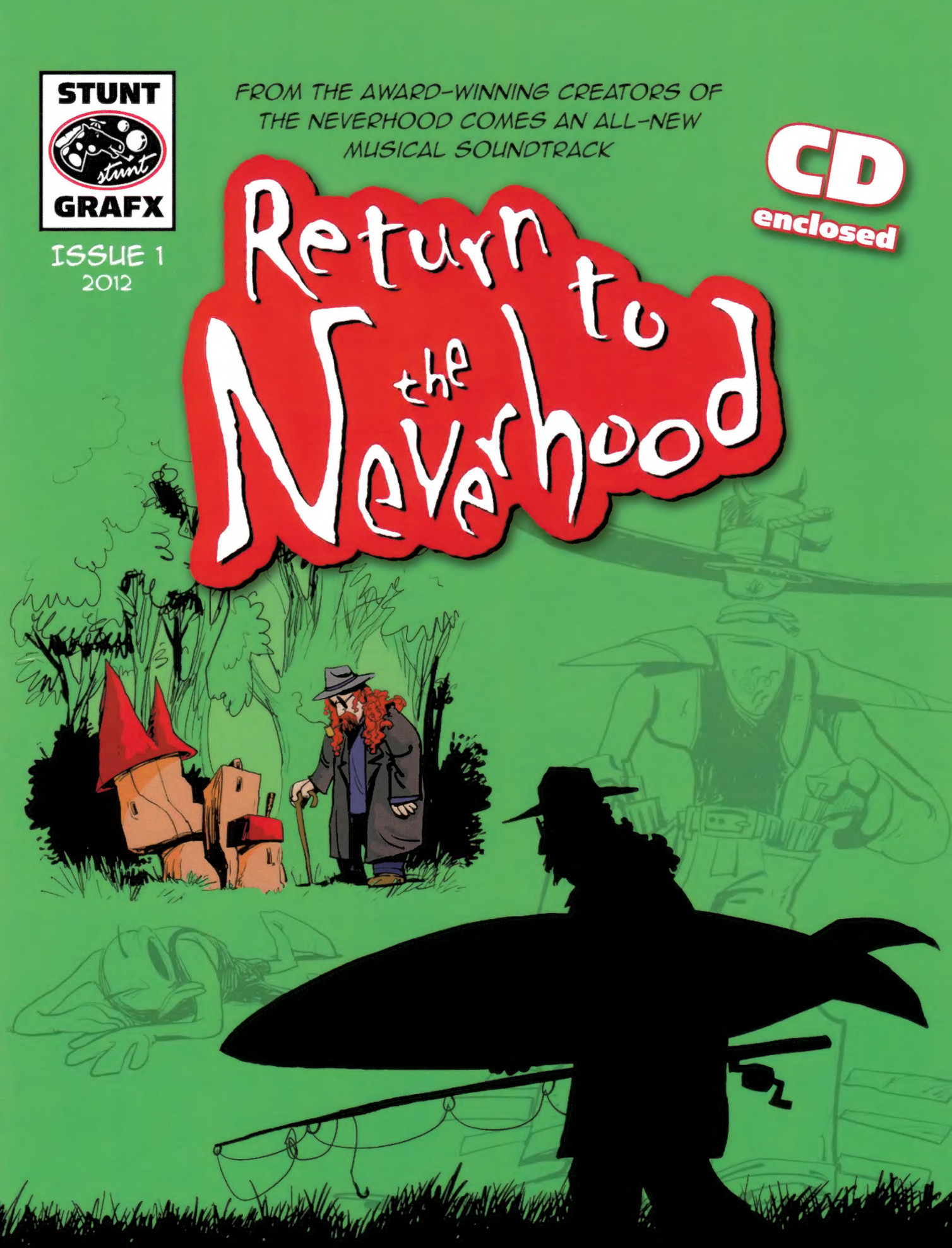
STUNT GRAFX

ISSUE 1
2012

FROM THE AWARD-WINNING CREATORS OF THE NEVERHOOD COMES AN ALL-NEW MUSICAL SOUNDTRACK

CD enclosed

Return to the Neverhood



A MUSICAL FAIRY TALE

MUSIC & NOVELLA BY TERRY SCOTT TAYLOR

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DOUG TENNAPEL

Return to the Neverhood

A MUSICAL FAIRY TALE

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TRACK LIST:

1) OVERTURE: THE RETURN
2) LET'S GET THIS BALL ROLLING!
3) OVER THE DEEPORAMA
4) OUT OF THE CLAY AND MUD /COILSSSSS AND SSSSSSPRINGSSSSS
5) RAISE THE FLAG BOYS, THEN LET'S GET TO WORK!
6) IT'S A DING DANG DAY
7) LORD LURKER/TOIL IN THE SOIL
8) A BAD APPLE A DAY HELPS THE CLAY DECAY
9) CLAY-GUY'S UNDOING

THE LOVE SWEET LOVE SUITE:

10) PART ONE: ODE TO A HUNCH
11) PART TWO: AT LEAST IN YOUR EYES MY LOVE

12) COME HELL OR HIGH WATER PANTS
13) & 14) & 15) HUH? WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I DON'T GET IT!
16) RUSHIN' WIND
17) THE WIND, HUMAN FLAME THROWERS, AND A BIT OF GIBBERISH
18) FISHIN' WITH THE SCULPTOR
19) FINALE: RETURN TO THE NEVERHOOD

STUNT GRAFX

INSPIRED BY THE NEVERHOOD, BY DOUG TENNAPEL
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ILLUSTRATIONS: DOUG TENNAPEL
PRODUCED BY TERRY SCOTT TAYLOR & TOM GULOTTA
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PUBLISHED BY: STUNT GRAFX & STUNT RECORDS

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ALL SONGS-SHAPE OF AIR MUSIC, BMI

THE ALL-CLAY BAND:
WOODWINDS AND SAX: SAM LEVINE
TRUMPET: STEVE PATRICK
TROMBONE: BARRY GREEN
GUITARS: MIKE ROE
DRUMS, PERCUSSION & ASSORTED EFFECTS:
STEVE HINDALONG
KEYBOARDS: DAVID ROACH
ELECTRIC BASS: TIM CHANDLER
STAND-UP BASS: CHRIS DONOHUE
BACKGROUND FEMALE VOCALS: LEISEL DROMI
GUITAR AND LEAD VOCALS: TERRY SCOTT TAYLOR

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FOR MORE CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS FROM
TERRY SCOTT TAYLOR INCLUDING THE ORIGINAL
SOUNDTRACKS TO *THE NEVERHOOD* & *SKULLMONKEYS*,
VISIT ***WWW.DANIELAMOS.COM***

DEEPEST LOVE AND THANKS TO TODD LUDAHL FOR MAKING THE WHOLE THING POSSIBLE.

PREFACE (OR WARNING, MAYBE)

I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS JUST HAPPENSTANCE THAT CAUSED ME TO DREAM THE MOST INCREDIBLY VIVID DREAM OF MY LIFE LAST NIGHT, OR IF IT WAS THE RESULT OF THE DOUBLE CHILI-DOG WITH JALEPEÑOS AND ONIONS I WOLFED DOWN, LIKE A BOA CONSTRICTOR SWALLOWING A PIG, ABOUT TEN MINUTES BEFORE HITTING THE SACK. TO SAY THAT THE DREAM WAS UNLIKE ANYTHING I'VE EXPERIENCED BEFORE IS, AT LEAST TO ME, AN IMPRESSIVE CLAIM, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE FACT THAT I'M AN OLD MAN AND I'VE DONE QUITE A BIT OF DREAMING IN MY TIME. I WILL SAY THAT THE MEANING OF LAST NIGHT'S COLORFUL KALEIDOSCOPIC DOOZY IS ONLY PARTIALLY CLEAR TO ME-AT LEAST FOR NOW.

DID I JUST NOW USE THE WORD "DOOZY"? SEE, I TOLD YOU I WAS OLD.

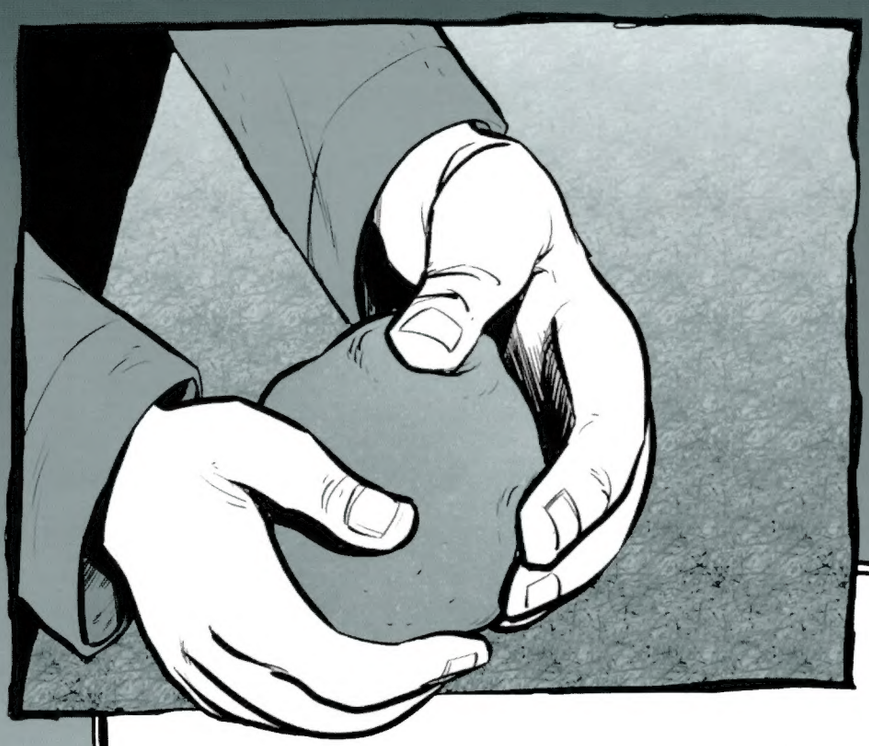
IT IS VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING AND I SIT SLEEPY-EYED HERE AT MY KITCHEN TABLE DRINKING MY HOT TEA AND TRYING NOT ONLY TO FIGURE OUT THE DREAM'S POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE, BUT ALSO PASSIONATELY INSPIRED AND COMPELLED BY ITS VIVIDNESS TO PUT THE OL' BIC TO PAPER AND TO PLACE EVERYTHING I'M ABOUT TO DESCRIBE AND ILLUSTRATE-AS COMICAL, MAGICAL, STRANGE, AND SOBERING AS IT IS-INTO THE HANDS OF WHOEVER FINDS THIS JOURNAL AFTER I KICK YE OLDE BUCKET AND PASS THROUGH TO WHATEVER IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DARK GATE.

I WOULD ALSO MENTION THAT THERE WAS MUSIC ACCOMPANYING MY DREAM AND THAT WHOEVER THE LEAD SINGER WAS, HE DIDN'T EXACTLY FLOAT MY BOAT IF YOU CATCH MY DRIFT. TO BE BLUNT, HE NOT ONLY MADE WILLIAM HUNG SOUND LIKE PLACIDO DOMINGO, BUT MADE ME WANT TO MOVE "EXPERIENCE COMPLETE DEAFNESS" TO THE HEAD OF MY BUCKET LIST. YOU KNOW IT'S BAD WHEN YOU ACTUALLY PRAY TO TAKE ON THE ONE PHYSICAL MALADY YOU DON'T SUFFER.

BE THAT AS IT MAY, IT APPEARS THAT THE OVERALL "THEME" OF THE DREAM, AT LEAST AS FAR AS I AM ABLE TO TELL AT THIS POINT, MAY BE OF SPECIAL INTEREST AND SIGNIFICANCE TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE THEIR CALLING IS IN THE ARTS, BUT I'M NO AL EINSTEIN AND CAN'T SAY THIS WITH ANY IRONCLAD CERTAINTY ANYMORE THAN I CAN SAY WITH ANY CONFIDENCE WHY ONE PARTICULAR CRITIC CALLED BOB DYLAN'S CHRISTMAS CD "A COMPLETELY DELIGHTFUL HOLIDAY TREAT." ANYWAY, LET ME ADD THAT WHOEVER YOU ARE, MY FUTURE READER, AND WHATEVER YOUR PASSIONS AND GIFTS, MY HOPE IS THAT YOU WILL UNCOVER SOMETHING EVEN REMOTELY INSPIRATIONAL WITHIN THESE PAGES. GOOD LUCK. YOU'RE GOING TO NEED IT!

SONG #1) OVERTURE: THE RETURN

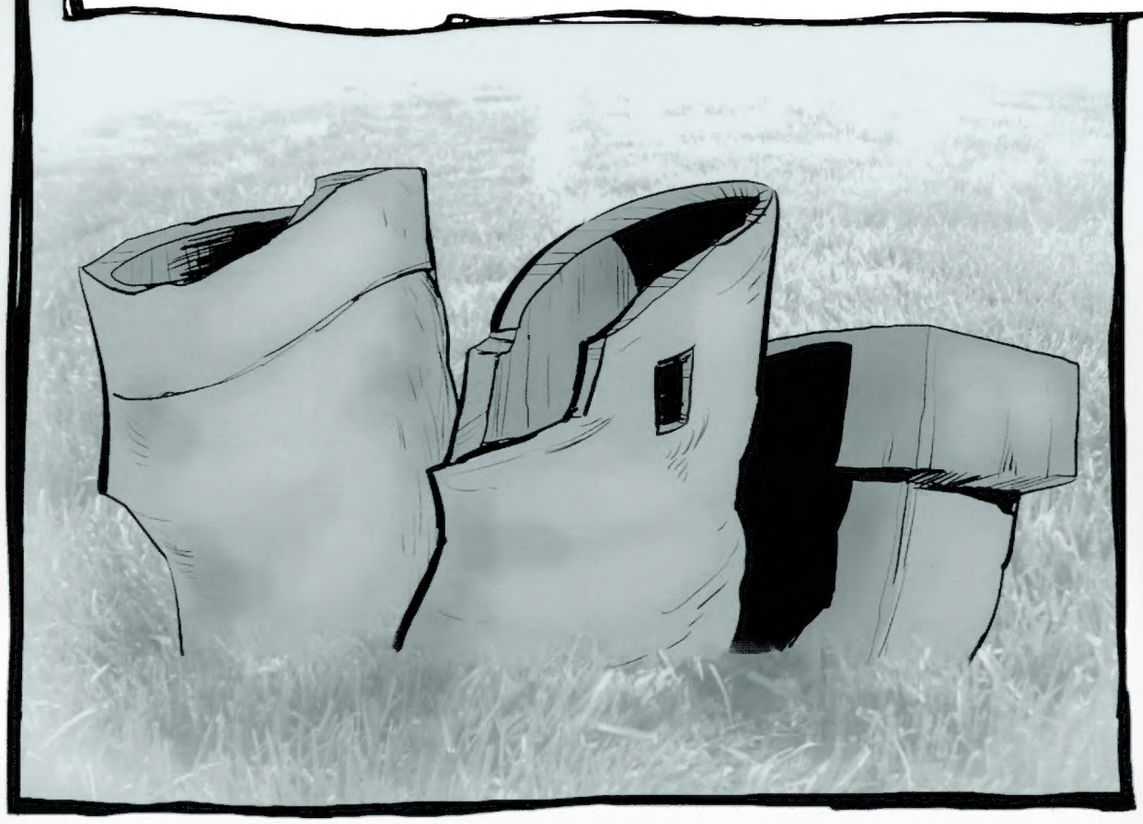
ONCE UPON A DREAM, (CLEVER EH?) AN OLD MAN WANDERS DOWN A MUDDY PATH LEADING THROUGH THE WOODS. ALONG THE WAY, HE MUMBLES TO HIMSELF (AS OLD MEN OFTEN DO) AND IN TIME HE HAPPENS UPON AN OLD ABANDONED SCULPTURE THAT INEXPLICABLY CAUSES HIM TO PERCEIVE THE BAREST WISP OF A LONG FORGOTTEN MEMORY AND, ALONG WITH IT, A PANG OF MELANCHOLY. YES, THE INCOMPLETE SCULPTURE LOOKS VAGUELY FAMILIAR, BUT THEN AGAIN, THE OLD MAN'S MEMORY IS ABOUT AS RELIABLE AS HIS INTESTINAL TRACT.



2) LET'S GET THIS BALL ROLLING!

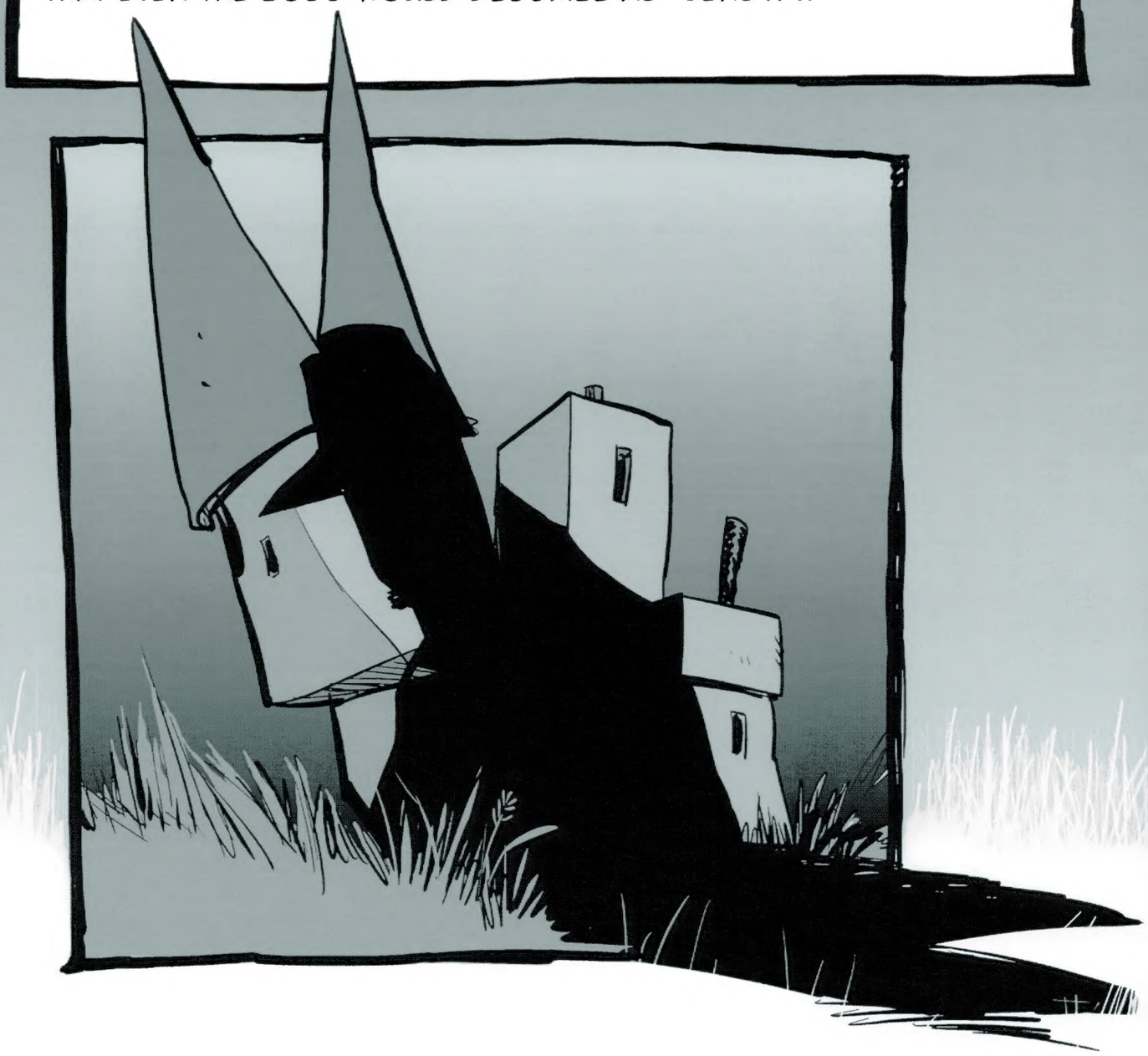
SCOOPING UP A HANDFUL OF CLAY AND MUD FROM THE SOGGY FOREST FLOOR, THE OLD MAN BEGINS TO WORK WITH THE JOYFULNESS OF A PIG IN SLOP, OR A BUDGET MINDED KIRSTIE ALLEY AT THE CIRCUS CIRCUS BUFFET. (OR A "BUTT-FET" AS I PREFER TO CALL THEM.)

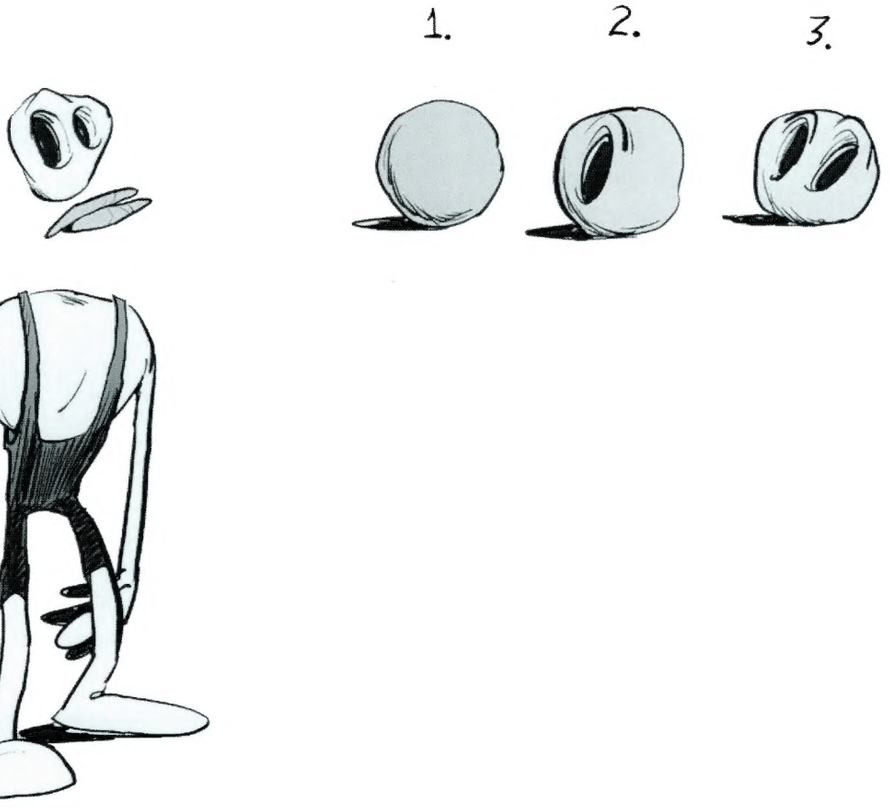
A MYSTERIOUS CELEBRATORY LAUGHTER SUDDENLY FILLS THE AIR ALL AROUND THE SCULPTOR, BUT THE OLD MAN DISMISSES IT AS A TRICK OF THE WIND.



3) OVER THE DEEPORAMA

THE SCULPTOR PASSIONATELY LABORS ON INTO THE WANING HOURS OF THE DAY, AND AS HIS SILHOUETTE FALLS ACROSS THE MINIATURE WORLD LIKE THE SHADOW BORN OF AN ECLIPSE, HE MOMENTARILY LOOKS UP FROM HIS TASK IN TIME TO OBSERVE, THROUGH A CLEARING IN THE WOODS, THE DISTANT SUN BEING SEVERED IN HALF BY THE BLADE OF A SHARP HORIZON. HE REALIZES THAT NOT ONLY IS HE PLEASED WITH THIS LAST DESCRIPTIVE PHRASE, BUT THAT THE TIMING COULD NOT BE MORE SERENDIPITOUS; HE IS ONLY MINUTES AWAY FROM COMPLETING HIS WORK. NO DOUBT HE COULD USE A BREAK, BUT HE CAN'T STOP NOW, EITHER TO REST OR TO LOOK UP THE WORD "SERENDIPITOUS"- PLUS THE POOR GUY IS REALLY SWEATING BECAUSE HE'S GOT THE BLADDER CONTROL OF A BEER-SWILLING E-STREET BAND MEMBER IN THE MIDDLE OF A SET THAT EVEN THE BOSS WOULD DESCRIBE AS "LENGTHY."



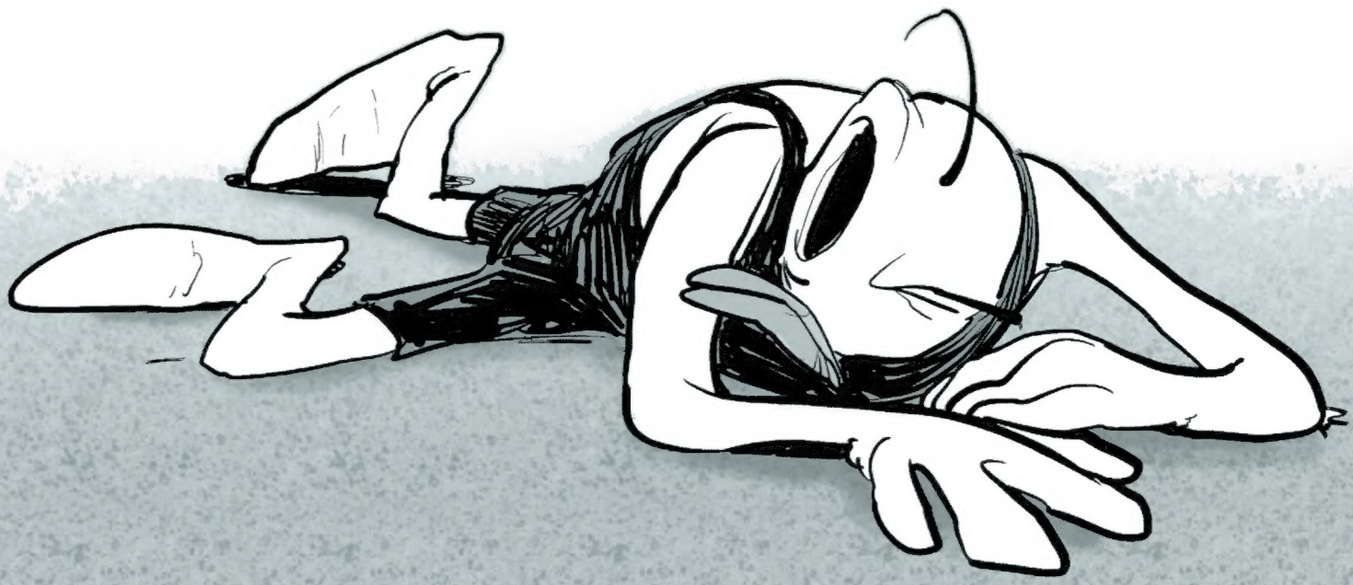


4) OUT OF THE CLAY AND MUD / COILSSSSS AND SSSSSSPRINGSSSSS

TWILIGHT HAS NOW PUT ON A DARKER COAT (NO, NOT LITERALLY FOR ANY BAPTISTS READING THIS) AND WHAT REMAINS OF THE LIGHT REVEALS THE LITTLE WORLD'S BORDERS SPREADING OUT IN MULTIPLE DIRECTIONS ACROSS THE WOODLAND FLOOR. MINIATURE CLAY BIRDS OF EVERY DESCRIPTION FILL THE AIR, SUSPENDED FROM SMALL BRANCHES WHICH HAVE BEEN MANUALLY STRIPPED OF THEIR LEAVES, INTERTWINED, AND THEN HUNG WITH CAREFUL CONSIDERATION ABOVE THE SUB-WORLD BELOW. A MULTITUDE OF CLAY FISH "SWIM" IN THE LITTLE WORLD'S VARIOUS LAKES, RIVERS, AND STREAMS. EVERY SORT OF ANIMAL DOTS THE HILLSIDES AND FIELDS. AT ONE POINT, THE OLD MAN CONSIDERS SCULPTING A MCDONALDS, BUT THEN THINKS BETTER OF IT SINCE 'CHICKEN MCMUD NUGGETS' DON'T SOUND PARTICULARLY APPETIZING. ON SECOND THOUGHT, THEY SOUND BETTER THAN ACTUAL CHICKEN MCNUGGETS BUT HE STILL DOESN'T SCULPT IT.

NOW THE SCULPTOR SCOOPS UP ONE FINAL HANDFUL OF MUD AND CLAY AND PROCEEDS TO FORM WHAT HE INTENDS TO BE HIS CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT.

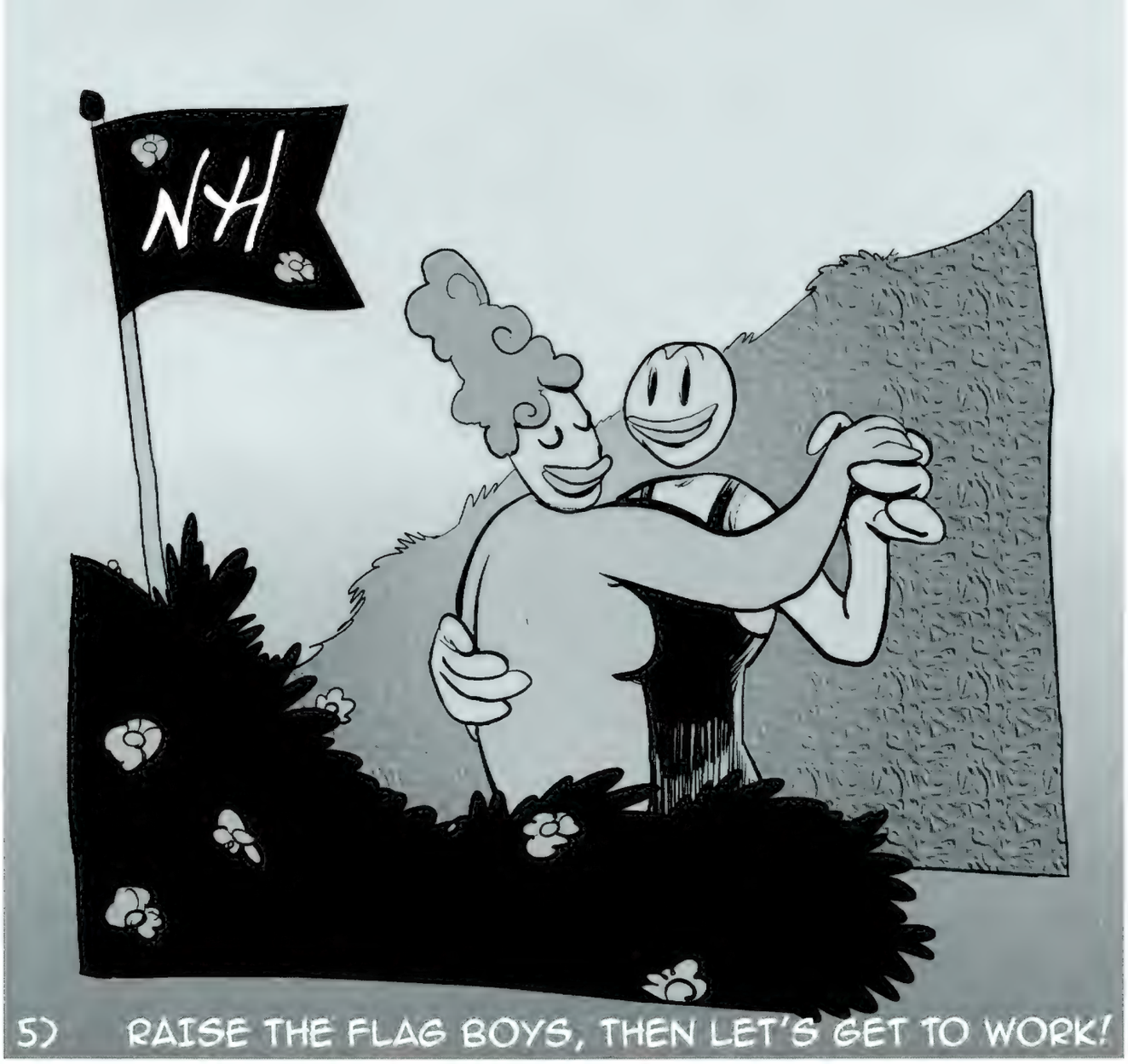
AS THE LAST RAYS OF SUNSET BEGIN TO DISAPPEAR BEHIND THE HORIZON, A MINIATURE MAN IS PLACED GENTLY IN THIS NEW WORLD AND ALMOST AS SOON AS THE DIMINUTIVE FIGURE IS SET DOWN, THE NEWLY FORMED "CLAY-GUY" BEGINS TO BREATHE AND TO MOVE ABOUT, ACQUAINTING HIMSELF WITH HIS SURROUNDINGS. SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, CLAY-GUY'S COMPANION "MUD-GAL" IS FORMED. HUBBA! HUBBA! SHE SIDLES UP BESIDE HIM AND SLIPS HER LOAMY HAND INTO HIS. BENEATH THE RADIANT GLOW OF THE REAL WORLD'S HARVEST MOON, IT IS TRULY LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT!



ALL OF THE CREATURES IN THE LITTLE WORLD ARE ALIVE NOW AND THIS IS WHEN, ONCE AGAIN, A STRANGE CHORUS OF JOYOUS, CELEBRATORY LAUGHTER-SEEMING TO EMANATE FROM SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE STARS-ECHOES THROUGH THE LEAFY HALLS OF THE GREAT WOODLAND CATHEDRAL IN WHICH THE SCULPTOR LABORS. THE CELESTIAL MERRIMENT IS POSITIVELY IRRESISTIBLE AND THE OLD MAN, WHO NOW HEARS IT CLEARLY FOR THE FIRST TIME, IS SO CAUGHT UP IN THE LAUGHTER THAT HE CONTINUES TO GUFFAW EVEN AFTER HIS DENTURES FALL OUT.

IN THE MEANTIME, A DARK FIGURE, (MAN? MACHINE? BOTH?), SKULKING BEHIND ONE OF THE NEWLY SCULPTED TREES IN THE MINIATURE WORLD, HAS BEEN WATCHING WITH MOUNTING PERPLEXITY AND RAGE. UP TO THIS POINT, THE SINISTER BEING HAS BEEN UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS NEW WORLD WAS HIS AND HIS ALONE. NOW HE TREMBLES WITH FURY AND SWEARS LIKE A DRUNKEN SAILOR AT AN EMPTY KEG OF RUM, SO AGHAST IS HE AT THE JOYFULLY CREATIVE TRESPASS GOING ON ALL AROUND HIM. HE THINKS, "HOW WILL I STOP THIS MADNESS? TREES AND ANIMALS AND PEOPLE ARE BAD ENOUGH, BUT NO MCDONALDS?! THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!! "

WIRES AND PISTONS AND SPRINGS DANCE INSIDE LORD LURKER AS HE CONTEMPLATES HIS NEXT MOVE. SOON, A FIENDISH SMILE ETCHES ITSELF ACROSS HIS MALEFICENT FACE AS THE MAKINGS OF AN EVIL PLAN BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE. "YESSSSSS"! HE HISSES. INDEED, LORD LURKER COULDN'T BE ANY HAPPIER IF HE WERE MEATLOAF AFTER A SIX-HOUR COLON CLEANSE.



CLAY-GUY AND MUD-GAL CHOOSE TO NAME THIS NEW LAND "THE NEVERHOOD." IN THE TOWN SQUARE, TO THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE, HEARTY CHEERS, AND THE SOUND OF TRUMPETS AND DRUMS BEING PLAYED BY THE VILLAGE'S NEW "ALL-CLAY BAND", THE RESIDENTS JUBILANTLY RAISE THE OFFICIAL FLAG. THE MAYOR CALLS FOR QUIET AMID THE CHAOS AND READS A LOVE LETTER FROM THE SCULPTOR. IN IT THE SCULPTOR INSTRUCTS THE GOOD FOLKS OF THIS NEW WORLD THAT THE KEY TO THEIR UNDYING HAPPINESS AND EVEN THEIR VERY SURVIVAL DEPENDS UPON TWO SIMPLE RULES; BEING MADE OF CLAY THEMSELVES, THEY MUST STAY WITHIN THE BORDERS OF THE NEVERHOOD AND THEY MUST ALSO PLANT AND GROW TREES AND RAISE FOOD FROM THE SOIL FROM WHICH THEY WERE FORMED, ONLY PARTAKING OF FOOD GROWN BY THEIR OWN HANDS IN THIS VERY SOIL. ANY OTHER FOOD WILL POISON THEM AND DESTROY THEIR FRAGILE HAPPINESS, NOT TO MENTION GIVE THEM ALL A RAGING CASE OF 'THE TROTS.'

THE MAYOR FINISHES READING THE LETTER, REVEALS A SMILE OF GLEAMING CHICKLET-LIKE ROCKS, AND WITH THE GREAT GUSTO OF A POLISHED POLITICIAN ANNOUNCES "NOW LET'S GET TO WORK PEOPLE OF NEVERHOOD!" TO EVEN LIVELIER CHEERS AND APPLAUSE, SAVE FOR THE BRONX CHEERS FROM HIS SKEPTICAL WIFE AND CHILDREN. AND SO THE PEOPLE, LIKE BUSY LITTLE BEES, BEGIN IMMEDIATELY TO BUILD NEW HOMES AND BUSINESSES AND ALL MANNER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY TO HELP SECURE A BRIGHT AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR ALL THE CITIZENS OF THE LAND. LONG LIVE THE NEVERHOOD! HIP HIP HOORAY!

6) IT'S A DING DANG DAY

CLAY-GUY AND MUD-GAL FALL INCREASINGLY IN LOVE WITH EACH PASSING DAY, SMOOCHING AROUND THE CLOCK LIKE A COUPLE OF LOVE STRUCK CLAY TEENAGERS. INTO THE WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING THEY WOULD OFTEN CELEBRATE THEIR UNION WITH SONG AND DANCE AND A DAILY CASE OF RED BULL EACH, EVER THANKFUL TO BE LIVING IN SUCH A WONDERFUL WORLD.

7) LORD LURKER/TOIL IN THE SOIL

ALTHOUGH CLAY-GUY AND MUD-GAL SOMEHOW MANAGE TO RESIST THE TEMPTATION, IT IS NOT LONG BEFORE MANY A HAPLESS CITIZEN OF NEVERHOOD IS LURED TO LORD LURKER'S STRONGHOLD IN THE EAST WITH THE PROMISE OF AN EVEN RICHER LIFE AND A YEAR'S SUPPLY OF KRISPY KREMES. UPON ARRIVAL, THEY ARE MET BY LORD LURKER, WHO SUDDENLY APPEARS IN ALL HIS SINISTER GLORY, TO ARREST AND ENSLAVE THEM. THEIR SAD SONG OF CRUEL CAPTIVITY CAN BE HEARD DAY AND NIGHT AS THEY ENDLESSLY TOIL-WITHOUT HEALTH BENEFITS-IN THE LURKER'S FIELDS, ORCHARDS, GOLD MINES, QUARRIES, AND WALMARTS.

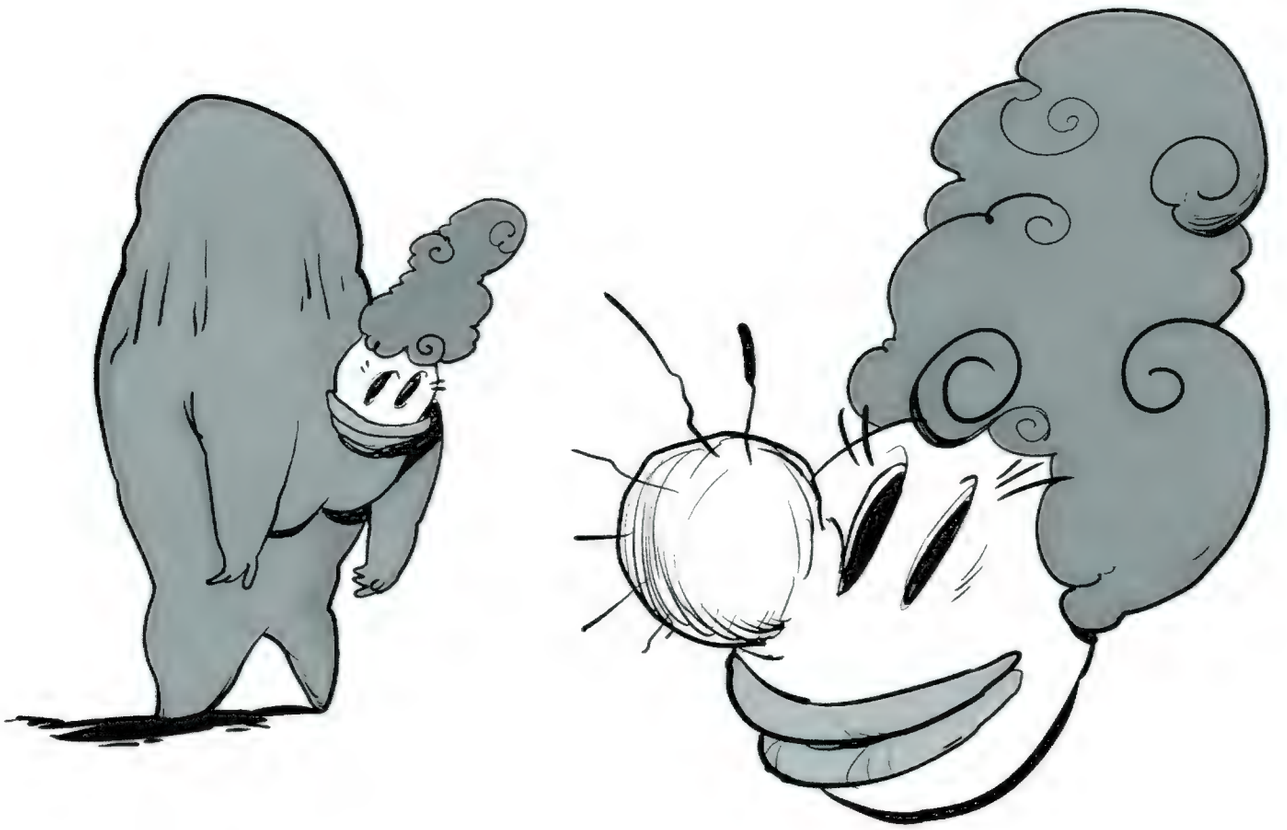
8) A BAD APPLE A DAY HELPS THE CLAY DECAY

A LARGE AND SUCCULENT FRUIT IS FOUND ONE DAY IN THE FOREST OUTSIDE THE TOWN AND UNABLE TO RESIST ITS GLISTENING APPEAL, CLAY-GUY AND MUD-GAL LUG IT INTO THE TOWN SQUARE AND ARE THE FIRST TO PARTAKE OF ITS INSIDIOUS PLEASURES. THIS IS A CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE SCULPTOR'S RULE, AND LITTLE DOES ANYONE KNOW THAT THIS IS FRUIT HARVESTED FROM LORD LURKER'S ORCHARDS IN THE EAST AND IS PART OF THE EVIL BEING'S PLAN TO ENSLAVE THE ENTIRE POPULACE AND TURN THEM INTO MINDLESS FREAKS WHO HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO SAY THAN "TALK TO THE CLAY HAND!" AND TO WRITE DAILY ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER ABOUT EXCITING STUFF LIKE WHAT THEY HAD TO EAT FOR LUNCH.

9) CLAY-GUY'S UNDOING

THE POISON FROM THE FRUIT WORKS ITS TERRIBLE MAGIC.

THE LOVE SWEET LOVE SUITE:



10) PART ONE: ODE TO A HUNCH

ELSEWHERE IN THE HOUSE, MUD-GAL UNDERGOES HER OWN POISON INDUCED METAMORPHOSIS. WHEN CLAY-GUY, UTILIZING HIS NEW HOOK FOR THE FIRST TIME TO DRINK A REFRESHING GLASS OF EVIAN "DE-PURIFIED DIRTY WATER," BEHOLDS THE RESULTS OF HIS WIFE'S TRANSFORMATION, (INCLUDING HER VERY COMELY HUNCH BACK), HE DOES A PERFECT SPIT TAKE AND SHOUTS "OOO LA LA!," (AND HE ISN'T EVEN VERY FOND OF THE FRENCH!), PROVING ONCE AND FOR ALL THAT LOVE TRULY IS BLIND!

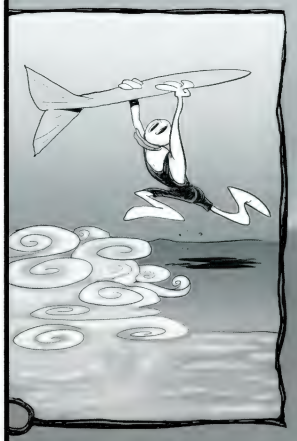
11) PART TWO: AT LEAST IN YOUR EYES MY LOVE

YES INDEED, LOVE CONQUERS ALL (OR ALMOST ALL). WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME, THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF LOVE AND DEVOTION BETWEEN OUR RATHER UN-LOVELY LOVEBIRDS BEGINS TO WORK ITS MAGIC, EVEN-TUALLY RESTORING THEM (PHYSICALLY AT LEAST) TO SOMETHING LIKE THEIR FORMER SELVES.

UNFORTUNATELY, ONE INDICA-TION OF NEGATIVE CHANGE IS THAT CLAY-GUY TAKES TO WEARING WRANGLER JEANS AND WIFE-BEATER SHIRTS, WHILE MUD-GAL FORSAKES HER MINI-SKIRTS AND NEG-LIGEES FOR MOO-MOOS AND GRANNY PANTIES.

12) COME HELL OR HIGH WATER PANTS

AS TIME PASSES, THE LURKER'S EVIL DESIRE TO ENSLAVE THE PEOPLE OF THE NEVERHOOD IS PROCEEDING AS PLANNED. ALL THE PEOPLE, INCLUDING CLAY-GUY AND MUD-GAL, HAVE BECOME GREEDY, SLOTHFUL, AND SLOW WITTED, WHICH MEANS THEY ALL IMMEDIATELY BECOME INTERESTED IN RUNNING FOR POLITICAL OFFICE.



ONE FATEFUL DAY AN EARTHQUAKE ROCKS THE LAND, CAUSING A MASSIVE OCEAN WAVE TO RISE UP AND WASH OVER ALL OF NEVERHOOD AND DROWNING MANY A POOR SOUL. MUD-GAL, WORKING AT HER DESK HIGH ATOP ONE OF THE TOWNS' NEWLY ERECTED SKYSCRAPERS AND DOING HER CLAY NAILS WHILE WEARING A MUD PACK OVER HER MUD FACE, HARDLY BATS AN EYE AS THE BUILDING ROCKS TWO AND FRO. SHE FORTUNATELY ESCAPES THE FLOOD.

ELSEWHERE, CLAY-GUY IS OUT TRAPPING WILD BOAR IN THE WOODS. WITH THE PASSING OF THE YEARS, GUY HAS BECOME A RATHER COCKY AND FEARLESS LITTLE MAN, LOVING NOTHING BETTER THAN TO GO DOWN TO NEVERHOOD BEACH ON THE WEEKENDS AND SPEND AN AFTERNOON KICKING SAND INTO THE FACES OF CONCAVE-CHESTED WEAKLINGS. HE'S THE KIND OF GUY WHO THINKS HIS OWN CLAY DOESN'T STINK.

AFTER SPOTTING THE APPROACHING TIDAL WAVE, CLAY-GUY FURIOUSLY WHITTLES A SURFBOARD FROM A PROPORTIONALLY PERFECT PIECE OF BALSA WOOD THAT "HAPPENS" TO BE CLOSE AT HAND (IT WAS SECRETLY PUT THERE BY YOU KNOW WHO), AND HE ESCAPES CERTAIN DEATH WHILE HANGING ALL EIGHT OF HIS CLAY TOES.

A DECAL MYSTERIOUSLY APPEARS ON THE SURFBOARD, WHICH READS: "THE SUN SHINES ON BOTH THE GOOD CLAY AND THE BAD CLAY ALIKE."

THE ARROGANT CLAY-GUY WILL AFTERWARD DECLARE THAT HIS INCREDIBLE SURFING AND WHITTLING SKILLS ALONE SAVED HIM FROM CERTAIN DEATH AND WILL ALSO CLAIM, LIKE A PENTECOSTAL EMBELLISHING HIS TESTIMONY, THAT HE WAS ABLE TO KEEP HIS ENERGY UP WHILE SURFING THE TIDAL WAVE BY CATCHING A SHARK WITH HIS BARE HANDS AND EATING IT.

13) & 14) & 15)

HUH? WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I DON'T GET IT!

*AT THIS POINT I WOULD LIKE TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU, MY READER, FOR THIS DISRUPTION IN THE NARRATIVE. ALTHOUGH I HAVE A NAGGING SENSE THAT THIS NEXT PART OF MY DREAM IS PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT, IT APPEARS TO BE A GREAT BIG JUMBLE OF VAGUE, SEEMINGLY UNRELATED IMAGES WHOSE MEANING IS PRETTY MUCH DANCING AROUND JUST OUTSIDE MY MENTAL GRASP LIKE, (AS SOMEONE ONCE WROTE), "A TRIBE OF WILD, FURTIVE GHOSTS." OKAY I ADMIT I WROTE THAT. I JUST NOW DECIDED I DON'T REALLY CARE IF YOU THINK MY DESCRIPTIONS ARE TOO ARTSY FARTSY. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO GET USED TO THE FACT THAT I'M BASICALLY A PRETENTIOUS ARTSY FARTSY KINDA GUY. JUST CALL ME MR. FANCY PANTS.

ANYWAY, I'VE BEEN DOING MY BEST TO PUT TOGETHER THIS JIGSAW PUZZLE OF FRACTURED IMAGES OCCURRING SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF MY DREAM, BUT MY EFFORTS APPEAR TO BE PRETTY MUCH A WASTE OF TIME, AND I'M SITTING HERE AS FRUSTRATED AND ANGRY WITH MYSELF AS A FAMISHED JOCK FINDING OUT TOO LATE THAT THE WINDOW'S BEEN CLOSED ON THE "MCRIB'S" LIMITED RELEASE. I'M LOOKING....

SORRY I HAD TO STOP MID SENTENCE THERE...HAD TO GO SEE A MAN ABOUT A HORSE.

OKAY, WHERE WAS I? I'M LOOKING OUT MY WINDOW AND TRYING TO GATHER MY THOUGHTS, AND NOW MY EYES HAVE FALLEN UPON A FAMILIAR SIGHT; THERE IN THE NEAR DISTANCE AND SURROUNDED BY RELATIVELY LESSER TREES, LOOMS MY OLD FRIEND THE ELM-PROUD, MAJESTIC, AND PROTECTIVE AS HE FAITHFULLY KEEPS WATCH OVER ME AND MY SURROUNDINGS LIKE A FAITHFUL SENTRY GUARDING AN ARMY OF FOREST UNDERLINGS. HIS BRANCHES DRIP WITH MOISTURE FROM LAST NIGHTS RAIN, BUT HE'S HAD A PRETTY GOOD NUMBER OF YEARS TO ADAPT TO EVERY KIND OF SEASONAL ELEMENT NATURE CAN THROW AT HIM, SO IT PROBABLY ISN'T NECESSARY FOR ME TO INVITE HIM IN FROM THE COLD AND OFFER HIM A WARM BLANKET AND A HOT TODDY.

I'VE ALWAYS FOUND THE OLD ELM TO BE AN INSPIRATIONAL TREE. THE TIMES ARE TOO MANY TO COUNT WHEN I'VE BEEN STUCK LIKE A HAMSTER ON A JAMMED WHEEL DURING ONE CREATIVE PROJECT OR ANOTHER AND SOMEHOW FOUND THE NEEDED IMPETUS TO GIRD MY LOINS (WHICH ISN'T QUITE AS PAINFUL AS IT SOUNDS) AND ESCAPE MY CREATIVE IMMOBILIZATION ONLY AFTER SETTLING MY EYES AND MY MIND ON THE MAJESTY AND WONDER OF THAT GRAND SPECIMEN. I THINK OF HIM FONDLY AS "MY WOODLAND MUSE." IN THE HOT SUMMERS I LOVE TO SIT OUT UNDER HIS SHADE AND DRINK A LITTLE GLASS OF SPIKED LEMONADE, WHICH I THINK OF FONDLY AS "MY WOODLAND BOOZE." ANYWAY, I ONCE CARVED, THEN PAINTED, A SMALL RELIGIOUS ICON, (ALSO AN INSPIRATION WHICH NOW HANGS HERE OVER MY KITCHEN SINK), USING ONE OF THE ELM'S LARGE FALLEN LIMBS WHICH HAD BEEN SEVERED IN A LIGHTENING STORM. IT FELT GOOD KNOWING I WAS NOT ONLY BRINGING A

part of my old friend inside to live with me, but honoring him with the sanctity of art rather than the indignity of the flame.

Wait! What's this?

Without warning, a numbing coldness seems to grip my bones, and from here I can see into my living room and am startled to find that the fire has abruptly died in the hearth. I fight to steady my hand as I write this because a number of shivers are currently vibrating down my spine, and then my blood suddenly leaps as I watch the diffused light of early morning outside my window darken with the shifting of clouds, and seemingly sinister shadows wrap themselves around the elm like an old tattered shawl. The old tree takes on a profoundly ancient and ominous appearance as low lying fog, draped around the lower trunk of the elm much like an ethereal skirt of Christmas snow, is now being stirred and lifted by sudden gust of wind just as a forlorn whistling, caused by the zephyr as it slips through a small crack in the kitchen window pane, reaches my ears. Simultaneously, the creaking and moaning in the cabin's rafters gets my heart gyrating like a jackhammer in full rock n' roll mode and, (to put it mildly), my "freak out-o-meter" is now banging 10.

I tell myself to get a grip, but I'm about as calm as Don Knotts in 'The Ghost and Mr. Chicken' as I watch the fog around the elm spiral upwards, (much like the hairs on the back of my neck are doing), and weave its ghostly tendrils through the trees various branches. The great swaths of draped fog look to me like a giant spider's work in progress.

Pardon my French, but "Holy Crepe!"

I also admit that my eyesight isn't all that great, and these old prescription glasses don't help much, but I swear I can now see something in the dim half-light and fog that resembles the ghostly figure of a man or a woman standing with his or her back against the trunk of the elm, their diaphanous arms outstretched as if to indicate both a beckoning and a willingness to embrace me. Yeah, sure. No problem. I'll be there in a sec. Maybe we can do that thing where we run in slow motion, fall into each other's arms, and twirl around like reunited lovers-or not. My greatest fear would be that the tree would most likely do a reverse Euell Gibbons and eat ***ME*** for lunch. (If you didn't live back before the wheel was invented, there's really no need to bother about this last archaic reference).

Amazingly, the sight of this ethereal figure against the tree suddenly brings on a flash-card series of mixed emotions-everything from fear and regret to sorrow and remorse-which are so psychologically pummeling, I'm left feeling like a pacifist in an Iron Man death match. The real problem here is that this is definitely not a dream, so I can state the following with utmost certainty: it's official--I've lost my mind.

Suddenly there is a slight shift of shadows and dissipation of fog, and with it the figure vanishes. Thank God.

"Foreboding" is the word that has been often coming to mind throughout the this little creep show, and now I'm thinking "Hey, who am I here, Edgar Allen Poe?" I partially break the spell with an attempt at a less than confident "You're being ridiculous" chuckle, (which is better than my other plan where I hide under the table and scream like a hysterical school girl), and still desperate to find comfort of some sort, my eyes are drawn to the icon nailed to the kitchen wall.

Something clicks in the ol' brain pan.

A last comes a liberating surge of supreme relief and joy as through my window I see the clouds part, the early morning sun gloriously rising a little higher from behind the distant hills, and the great tree-no longer swathed in fog and patchwork shadow-transformed into its former grandeur and beauty, only now my old friend seems to have taken on a kind of luminosity I've never seen him possess before, and as I watch on in awe and wonder, a nimbus of seemingly supernatural golden light begins to radiate around his leafy crown. At this point I could say something about this glorious spectacle like "Awesome dude!," but I'll go ahead and stick to an age-appropriate exclamatory phrase: "Hey Nonny Nonny and a Hotchacha!"

"Renewal" appears to be the operating word here.

The clouds partially close again, but even though my old friend is once more awash in gun-grey morning light and tattooed again with shadows cast by the finicky clouds, gloriously, everything is once more as it should be, and it's as if a psychological bully has just now mercifully released me from a rather painful brain wedgie.

Okay, I fully admit I'm feeling a little silly for having thought my friend capable of anything-what's the word?-nefarious. I'm also thankful that I'm no longer expecting Rod Serling, with cigarette in hand, to suddenly step out from behind my refrigerator and do a voice-over; I mean the guy didn't have any lips for heaven's sake and frankly I've had all the scares I can take in one day! Still, no doubt there is something deeply significant and personal here bonding me to this unlikely trinity; tree, icon, and dream, but right now, understanding this connection, (much less trying to decipher the greater truths the dream suggests), is as foreign and befuddling to me as cursive writing is to a modern day teenager.

Strange. So very, very strange.

Okay, no more speculative dilly-dallying. Let's get back to the parts of the dream I do remember...

16) RUSHIN' WIND

A NEW MAGIC IS IN THE AIR. GREAT TRANSFORMING EVENTS ARE TAKING PLACE IN THE NEVERHOOD, AND IT'S ANYONE'S GUESS AS TO WHICH WAY THE WILD WIND WILL BLOW. NO ONE IS SAFE. FEAR. MOURNING. CONFUSION. CLARITY. REDEMPTION! HOOPLA! PARTY ON, DUDE!

A GREAT WIND NOW BEGINS TO BLOW ACROSS THE NEVERHOOD, CAUSING EVEN MORE BUILDINGS AND TREES TO TOPPLE AND LIFTING MANY UNFORTUNATE ANIMALS AND HUMANS, (WHO IRONICALLY HAD SURVIVED THE FLOOD), HIGH INTO THE SKY WHERE THEY ARE CARRIED AWAY TO VARIOUS UNMENTIONABLE FATES. INDEED, PIGS COULD BE SEEN FLYING AND SEVERAL EYEWITNESSES SPOT A COW JUMPING (SO TO SPEAK) OVER THE NEVERHOOD MOON SHORTLY BEFORE CRASH LANDING AND BEING INSTANTLY GRILLED UP AT THE LOCAL SIZZLER.

ONCE AGAIN OUR LOVE BIRDS MANAGE TO ESCAPE HARM, BUT THE MAGICAL WIND HAS A PARTICULARLY STRANGE EFFECT ON THEM AND THE REMAINING RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGE, (NOW A CRIME-RIDDEN AND OVERPOPULATED CITY WITH A NUMBER OF ONLY SLIGHTLY INTIMIDATING CLAY-GANGS WHOSE WEAPONS OF CHOICE ARE DIRT CLODS AND MUD PIES). SUDDENLY EVERYONE FINDS THEMSELVES DANCING WILDLY THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE METROPOLIS-FOLDING THEIR ARMS ACROSS THEIR CHESTS, SQUATTING AND KICKING THEIR LEGS OUT AT VARIOUS INTERVALS, AND VIGOROUSLY SHOUTING "HEY!" IN TIME TO THE JAUNTY MUSIC BEING PLAYED BY "THE ALL-CLAY BAND." THE LOCAL 99 CENT STORE SOON RUNS OUT OF COSSACK HATS AND CHEAP VODKA.

17) THE WIND, HUMAN FLAME THROWERS, AND A BIT OF GIBBERISH

AMAZINGLY, UNLIKE THE OTHERS, INSTEAD OF SHOUTS EMERGING FROM GUY AND GAL AS THEY DANCED AROUND, GIANT COLUMNS OF FIRE WOULD ROAR OUT OF THE ASTONISHED COUPLE'S MOUTHS EVERY TIME THEY DARED TO OPEN THEM. OUR HEROES HAVE BECOME A PAIR OF HUMAN FLAME THROWERS! AS IF THIS WEREN'T BIZARRE ENOUGH, OUT OF THE FLAMES EMERGE MULTIPLE VOICES SPEAKING WHAT SOUNDS TO MANY WITNESSES LIKE A KIND OF HIGH-PITCHED GIBBERISH-MUCH LIKE THE KIND YOU HEAR ON THE VIEW, ONLY FAR LESS IRRITATING.

THE FLAMES IGNITE SEVERAL BUSHES AND TREES AND SOON A GREAT WALL OF FIRE, BLOWN BY THE WIND, BEGINS TO SPREAD IN AN EASTERLY DIRECTION STRAIGHT TOWARDS LORD LURKER'S STRONGHOLD HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY. EVENTUALLY, LORD LURKER, WHILE WATCHING CLAY AIKEN PERFORM ON HIS BRAND NEW SONY "HERE'S MUD IN YOUR EYE 3-D TELEVISION," IS OVERCOME BY THE FIRE. THE FENCES SURROUNDING THE LURKER'S STRONGHOLD ARE BURNT DOWN AND HIS CAPTIVES ARE GLORIOUSLY SET FREE!

IN TIME, A RESTORED NEVERHOOD VILLAGE WILL RISE FROM THE MUD HEAP, AND EVERYTHING WILL ONCE AGAIN BE HUNKY DORY. BUT IN THE MEANTIME....

18) FISHIN' WITH THE SCULPTOR

THE SCULPTOR HAS ALSO BEEN AFFECTED BY THE STRANGE MAGIC NOW INVADING BOTH HIS MINIATURE WORLD AND THE GREATER WORLD IN WHICH HE LIVES. HE IS OVERCOME WITH SLEEP AND AS HE SLUMBERS THE YEARS PASS QUICKLY BY. AT LAST, WHEN THE EVEN OLDER SENIOR CITIZEN FINALLY AWAKENS AND SEES HIS REFLECTION IN A NEARBY POOL OF WATER, HE REALIZES THAT DESPITE THE FACT HE'S NEVER BEEN ABLE TO GROW A DECENT BEARD, IN EVERY OTHER WAY HE RESEMBLES THE ELDERLY HOWARD HUGHES, INCLUDING HAVING A BAD CASE OF 'BED HAIR' AND BREATH THAT WOULD CAUSE BILL MAHER TO REPENT. TO HIS UTTER ASTONISHMENT THE OLD MAN ALSO REALIZES THAT HE HAS SOMEHOW ENTERED HIS OWN SCULPTURE!

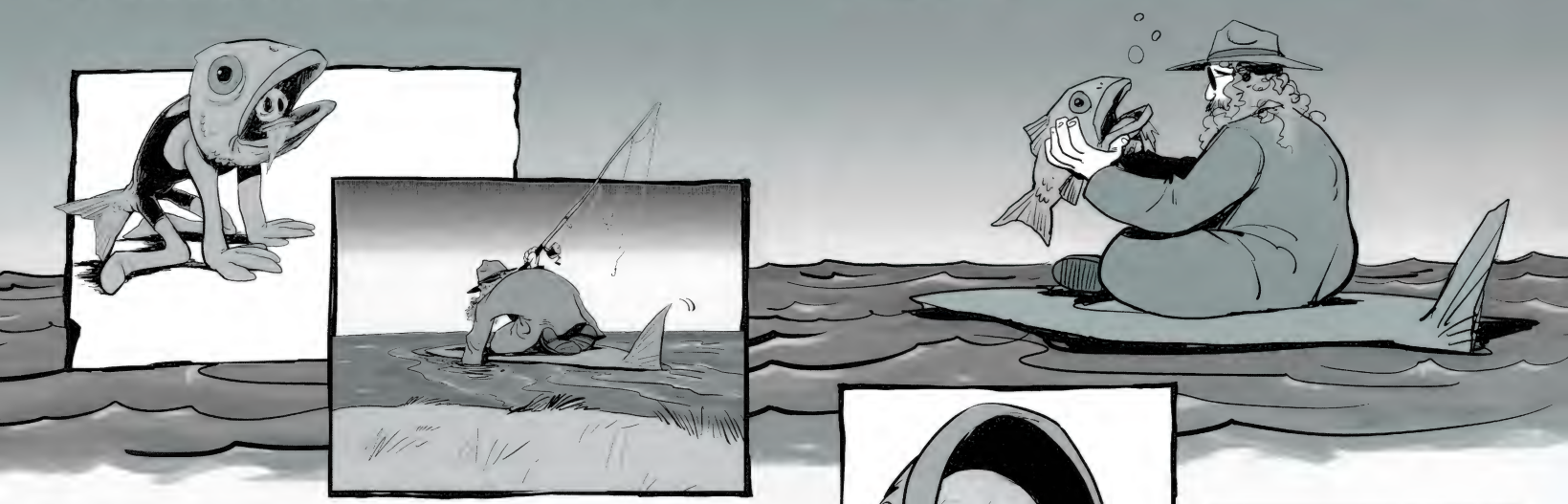
HE BEGINS TO BUMBLE ABOUT, EXPLORING HIS NEW SURROUNDINGS AND ALMOST BREAKING HIS HIP FOR THE 4TH TIME UNTIL EVENTUALLY COMING UPON THE ABANDONED SURFBOARD LEFT LONG AGO BY CLAY-GUY IN THE FOREST SHORTLY AFTER THE GREAT FLOOD. EVEN THOUGH THE OLD MAN, JUST LIKE BRIAN WILSON AND MOST OF THE BEACH BOYS, ISN'T A SURFER HIMSELF AND THE LARGE LUMPS ON HIS FEET AREN'T EXACTLY SURFING KNOBS, (BUT RATHER PAINFULLY THROBBING CORNS AND BUNIONS), HE CAN'T HELP BUT SHOUT OUT LOUD "KOWABUNGA!" AND IMAGINE HIMSELF PLAYING A UKULELE WHILE SINGING "ITSY BITSY TEENY WEENIE YELLOW POLKA DOT BIKINI" TO A SWOONING ANNETTE FUNICELLO. THE SURFBOARD IS PROPPED AGAINST A FALLEN TREE TRUNK AND NEXT TO THE BOARD RESTS A FISHING POLE. THE OLD MAN IMMEDIATELY KNOWS WHAT HE MUST DO NEXT; HE PICKS UP BOTH OBJECTS AND PURPOSEFULLY MAKES HIS WAY THROUGH THE WOODS TOWARDS NEVERHOOD LAKE.

IT'S A LONG WALK AND HE WISHES THAT, LIKE IN THE REAL WORLD, HE HAD HIS MOTORIZED ''RASCAL'' TO RIDE AROUND IN, BUT HE KNOWS HE DOESN'T HAVE THE SAME POWER HERE IN THIS WORLD AS HE DOES IN HIS OWN, SO FASHIONING AN ELECTRIC WHEEL CHAIR OUT OF MUD JUST ISN'T IN THE CARDS.

AT LAST THE OLD MAN ARRIVES AT THE LAKE. AT FIRST HE HAS NO SUCCESS IN CATCHING FISH, AND JUST AS THE THOUGHT OCCURS TO HIM THAT HE MIGHT BE CASTING HIS LINE TOO FAR OUT ON THE LAKE, THE WATERS AROUND HIM BEGIN TO TEEM WITH FISH OF EVERY SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR. YOU KNOW BY NOW THAT THIS ISN'T AN ORDINARY CLICHE-RIDDLED FAIRY TALE, SO NO, NONE OF THE FISH MAGICALLY TALKED-THOUGH, ODDLY ENOUGH, ONE OF THE TROUT WAS SPORTING A LITTLE DRUM MAJOR'S HAT.

WHILE MUD-GAL, (WHO HAS SEEN THE LIGHT AND IS A CHANGED WOMAN), KEEPS BUSY IN WHAT'S LEFT OF DOWNTOWN BY WORKING THE PHONES ON BEHALF OF A CHARITY DIRT DRIVE, THE NOW ELDERLY CLAY-GUY STANDS ON THE SHORE WATCHING SLACK-JAWED AND WIDE-EYED AS THE FIGURE IN THE BOAT PULLS FISH FROM THE LAKE USING ONLY HIS BARE HANDS. WHILE GAZING IN WONDER AT THIS SPECTACLE, GUY IS PHYSICALLY TRANSFORMED ONCE AGAIN, AND WITH THIS SUDDEN CHANGE COMES THE STRANGE THOUGHT THAT DIVING INTO THE WATER, SWIMMING TOWARDS THIS STRANGER, AND ALLOWING HIMSELF TO BE CAPTURED WOULD BE AS NATURAL TO HIM AS A BIRD TAKING TO THE HEAVENS, OR A FAT GUY DIVING INTO A TRIPLE WHOPPER.

OF THE BLUE, A STRANGE MUSIC, CARRIED BY THE WIND AND RICH WITH THE MELODY OF BITTERSWEET YEARNING, COMES FLOATING OVER THE HILLS. UPON HEARING IT, CLAY-GUY IS FILLED WITH A WILLPOWER HE HAS NEVER PREVIOUSLY KNOWN, AND TURNING BACK IN THE DIRECTION OF THE STRANGER IN THE BOAT, OUR HERO NO LONGER HESITATES. HE LEAPS HEADLONG INTO THE COOL, TRANSFORMING WATERS OF THE LAKE. AS HE SWIMS, HE HAS AN OVERWHELMING HANKERING AT ONE POINT TO STOP AND SUCK SCUM, BUT IGNORES IT AND HEADS STRAIGHT FOR THE BOAT AND THE STRANGER.



GUY EDGES TOWARD THE WATER. ALTHOUGH HE HAS EVERY INTENTION OF TAKING THE PLUNGE, UNBEKNOWNST TO HIM, EACH BEAT OF HIS HEART IS SENDING THE DORMANT POISON FROM THE LURKER'S FRUIT COURSING THROUGH HIS VEINS, AS WELL AS GIVING HIM SCALDING HEARTBURN FOR WHICH HE CURSES HIMSELF FOR NOT BRINGING HIS BOTTLE OF 'MILK OF MUDNESIA' WITH HIM. GUY GROWS INCREASINGLY WEAKER UNTIL AT LAST THIS PETRIFYING ONSLAUGHT OF CONFUSION AND FEAR LEAVES HIM STRANDED ON THE SHORE, FRUSTRATED AND ASHAMED AND WEEPING GREAT DROPS OF DIRTY, BACTERIA-INFESTED TEARS. UNABLE TO GO ONE STEP FURTHER, HE HANG-DOGGEDLY BEGINS TO TURN AWAY-DEFEATED AND BROKENHEARTED. IN FACT HE FEELS MORE TERRIBLE NOW THAN HE DID THE DAY MUD-GAL ASKED HIM IF SHE LOOKED FAT IN HER NEW TUTU AND HE LAUGHED SO HARD THAT HE BLEW A HALF PINT OF CHOCOLATE MUD MILK OUT THROUGH HIS NOSE.

INSIDE THE MOUTH OF THE LAST FISH CAUGHT THAT DAY, THE SCULPTOR MAKES A WONDROUS DISCOVERY THAT FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT MAKES HIM THINK HE'S STARRING IN A LOW-BUDGET REMAKE OF '2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY'.

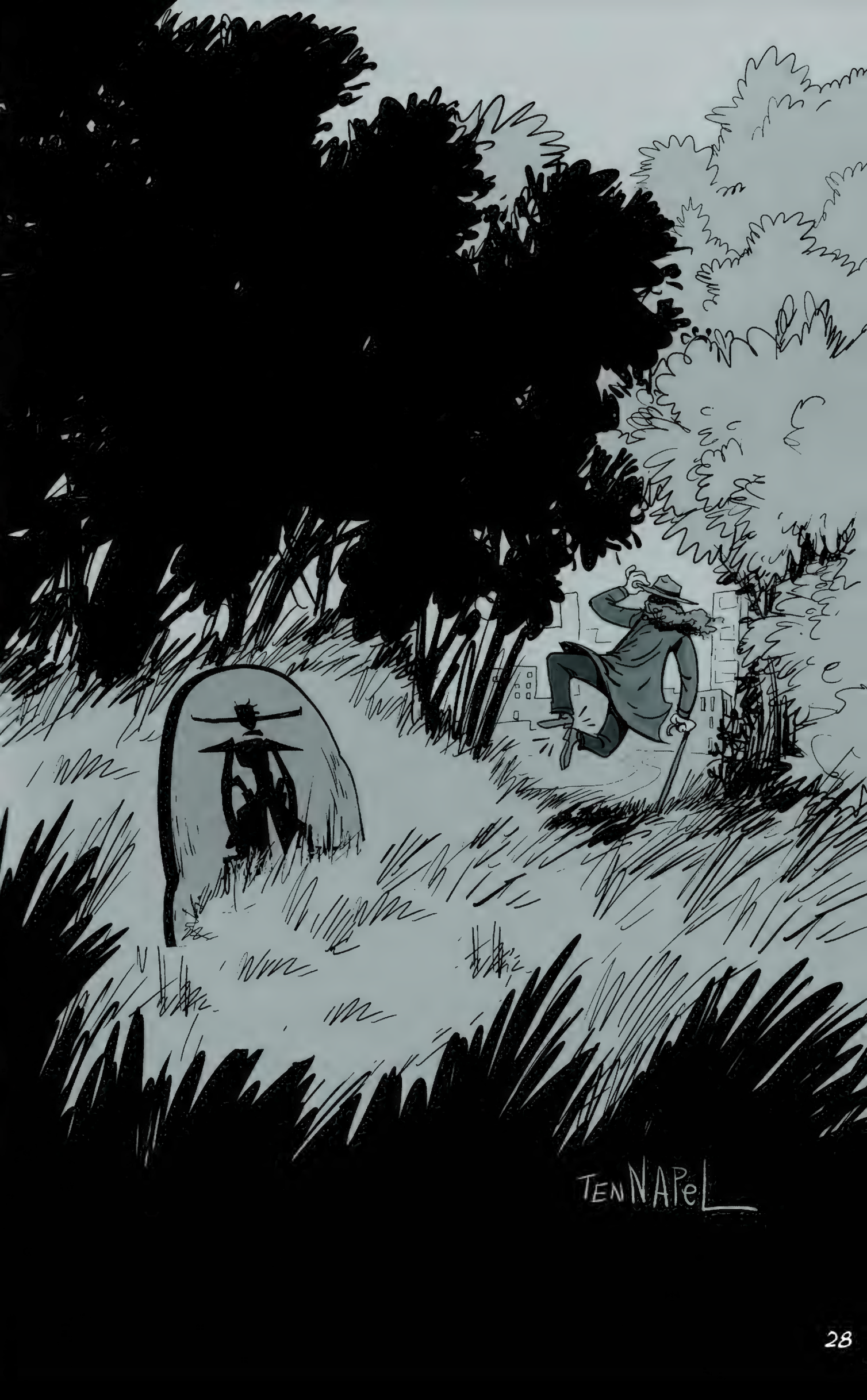
19) FINALE: RETURN TO THE NEVERHOOD

OH JOY! OH BLISS! OH.....WHATEVER. THE NEVERHOOD IS MIRACULOUSLY RESTORED EVER AFTER TO ITS FORMER GLORY! IN FACT, THE VILLAGE IS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN EVER AND ITS CITIZENS EVEN MORE JOYFUL, PROSPEROUS, AND GRACIOUS OF HEART THAN THEY WERE WHEN THE LITTLE VILLAGE WAS FIRST ESTABLISHED. THE MAYOR ACTUALLY SUPPORTS TERM LIMITS, HIS WIFE CANCELS DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS, AND EVEN "THE ALL CLAY BAND," WHO BROKE UP AFTER A ROYALTY DISPUTE WITH DIRT WORKS RECORDS, GETS BACK TOGETHER AGAIN FOR A MONEY GRUBBING REUNION TOUR. CLAY-GUY AND MUD-GAL ARE NOW MORE YOUTHFUL, VIBRANT, AND MUCH DEEPER IN LOVE THAN THEY WERE WHEN THEY'D FIRST LAID EYES ON ONE ANOTHER, AND ONCE AGAIN THEY ARE CONSTANTLY EXCHANGING SLOPPY, MUD-DRIPPING KISSES AND DOING THE DIRTY DANCING VERSION OF THE 'HOOCHIE KOO' IN TIME TO BARRY WHITE'S "CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF YOUR MUD, BABE." MUD-GAL WILL SOON CHANGE HER NAME TO "MUD-DONNA" AND GO ON TO PURSUE A SUCCESSFUL MUSIC CAREER AND MOST GLORIOUS OF ALL, OUR TWO LOVEBIRDS WILL LIVE AN EXTRAORDINARILY WONDERFUL FAIRY TALE LIFE...WHICH IS JUST ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING "AND THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY ...BLAH BLAH BLAH"

THE SCULPTOR? WELL, NOW THAT HIS MISSION IS COMPLETE, HE TOO IS JOYFUL AND YOUTHFUL AND WHISTLING A HAPPY AND SLIGHTLY IRRITATING TUNE AS HE KICKS UP HIS FEET OF CLAY AND MAKES HIS WAY INTO WHAT IS KNOWN IN THESE PARTS AS THE DEEP WOODS. THIS IS A STRANGE AND MYSTERIOUS PLACE AND FEW POSSESS THE COURAGE TO ENTER IT. LET'S JUST SAY THAT HUMILITY, SACRIFICE, FAITH, AND LOVE-RATHER THAN RICHES, POWER, OR PRESTIGE-ARE THE COIN OF THE REALM IN THE DEEP WOODS, AND THESE ALONE SECURE ENTRY. IT IS ALSO BELIEVED THAT FOR THE FEW (SOME WOULD SAY "THE CALLED") WILLING TO PAY THIS PRICE, GREAT REWARD AWAITS.

ANYWAY, THE SCULPTOR IS LAUGHING AND DANCING NOW, (IF YOU CAN CALL IT "DANCING"), JUST LIKE A ONE-LEGGED D LIST "CELEBRITY" ON DANCING WITH THE STARS....FOR IT'S ONWARD AND UPWARD, FURTHER UP AND FURTHER IN AND YES, DEEPER INTO THE HEART OF THE NEVERHOOD!

THE END


TENNAPEL

SO THERE YOU HAVE IT. WAS IT A DREAM ABOUT ART AND THOSE WHO CREATE IT? MAYBE. NO? HAS YOUR THINKIN' CAP RUN OUT OF BATTERY POWER THERE MR. DAVINCI? ANYWAY, I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THERE IS A GREATER MEANING HERE STILL TO BE DISCOVERED, AND THAT GETTING TO IT IS MUCH LIKE TRYING TO GATHER ENOUGH CLUES TO LOCATE THE PROVERBIAL "PEARL OF GREAT PRICE," OR A DER WIENER SCHNITZEL AT A PETA CONVENTION. MAYBE, (AS I MENTIONED EARLIER), THE KEY TO IT ALL REMAINS HIDDEN SOMEWHERE IN THE LOST SECTION OF MY DREAM. THEN AGAIN, THE WHOLE THING MAY BE AS MEANINGLESS AS THE LYRICS TO "STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN."

THROUGH THE KITCHEN WINDOW OF MY CABIN I ONCE AGAIN OBSERVE MY FRIEND THE ELM, WHOSE BRANCHES ARE STILL DRIPPING WITH MORNING DEW AND RAIN WATER FROM LAST NIGHT'S STORM. AND THERE-APPEARING VERY SIMILAR TO THE IMAGE IN MY DREAM- IS THE FAMILIAR PATHWAY, NOW MUDDY AND PARTIALLY CLOAKED IN MIST, LEADING FROM MY DOORWAY INTO THE THICKET OF THE FOREST.

BEING A BIT WEAK IN THE KNEE (LITERALLY) AND NO SPRING CHICKEN, I FIND IT SOMETIMES PAINS ME TO WALK-ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S COLD OUTSIDE-SO I WOULD NORMALLY STAY INSIDE ON A MORNING LIKE THIS. MY DILEMMA HOWEVER IS NOT THAT MY "PAL" IS ON THE FRITZ, BUT THAT I CAN'T IGNORE WHAT CAN ONLY BE CALLED 'THE COMPULSION OF MY HEART' TO FOLLOW THE PATH AND GO WHEREVER IT LEADS, EVEN IF IT IS FARTHER DOWN THE WALKWAY THAN I HAVE EVER GONE IN THE PAST. IT'S SIGNIFICANTLY STRONG, THIS URGENCY, AND TO IGNORE IT WOULD BE SOMETHING AKIN TO RESISTING GRAVITY ITSELF OR LIKE CHRIS ROCK AVOIDING THE "F" WORD.

HAVE I MENTIONED THAT I'M AN ARTIST? WELL...I ADMIT I'M NOT A VERY SUCCESSFUL ONE, (THAT IS IF A PERSON'S WORTH IS MEASURED PRIMARILY WITH A MONETARY YARDSTICK), BUT FOR ME THE PASSIONATE DESIRE TO CREATE HAS NOTHING AT ALL TO DO WITH FAME OR FINANCIAL SUCCESS-IT'S MORE ALONG THE LINES OF BREATHING THE VERY BREATH OF GOD. OKAY, SORRY IF I'M GETTING A BIT HEAVY HERE AND MAYBE MAKING YOU, (WHOEVER YOU ARE), A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE. YOU'RE PROBABLY THINKING "HEY, LIGHTEN UP PREACHER DUDE.. WE DON'T NEED NO STINKING SERMONS!" MY APOLOGIES. I'M JUST THROWING AROUND SOME THOUGHTS AND IDEAS-DIDN'T MEAN TO GO ALL JIMMY SWAGGART ON YOU. (UGH, THAT'S AN UNFORTUNATE IMAGE!). ANYWAY, MY URGE TO CREATE HAS ALWAYS TAKEN THE FORM OF AN ITCH-BOTH LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY-AND STRANGELY, RIGHT THIS SECOND MY HANDS ARE TINGLING WITH AN IRRESISTIBLE COMPULSION; NO,

NOT TO REACH FOR THE 'MEDICATED GOLD BOND RASH AND CARBUNCLE CREME,' LOCATED ON THE BATHROOM SHELF NEXT TO THE TWELVE GALLON DRUM OF 'PREPARATION H' AND MY BOX OF 'BIG PEOPLE HUGGIES,' BUT IT'S THE URGE TO MOLD AND SHAPE SOMETHING I FEEL IS OF PRETTY CONSIDERABLE CONSEQUENCE, ALTHOUGH IT'S ONE THAT, LIKE PARTS OF MY DREAM, STUBBORNLY REMAINS JUST OUTSIDE THE BORDERS OF MY MENTAL PERIPHERY-SOMETHING "UNFINISHED" THAT PERHAPS WAITS FOR ME OUT THERE AT THE END OF THE SODDEN PATH LEADING FROM MY MODEST HABITAT INTO A WOODLAND WORLD AWASH IN BOTH SHADOW AND LIGHT.

HMMMM....I SEE THE FOG IS BEGINNING TO CLEAR AWAY NOW. I SUPPOSE THIS IS AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY TO GET OFF MY ANCIENT SAGGING WIDE-WHITE AND FOLLOW THE PATH. GOD ONLY KNOWS WHERE IT WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD.

TERRY SCOTT TAYLOR HAS BEEN CREATING MUSIC FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS, STARTING IN HIS TEENAGE YEARS IN VARIOUS BAY AREA BANDS ON THROUGH THE PRESENT DAY AS LEADER AND CHIEF SONGWITER OF DANIEL AMOS, THE SWIRLING EDDIES AND THE LOST DOGS. HE HAS CREATED MUSIC FOR MANY OF DOUG TENNAPEL'S BEST WORKS INCLUDING THE SOUNDTRACKS TO THE NEVERHOOD (FOR WHICH HE WON "BEST GAME MUSIC" BY SONY PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE IN 1995), SKULLMONKEYS, BOOM-BOTS, PROJECT GEEKR AND NICKELODEON'S CATSCRATCH.
FOR MORE INFO VISIT DANIELAMOS.COM

DOUG TENNAPEL IS AN AMERICAN MUSICIAN, ANIMATOR, EISNER AWARD-WINNING ARTIST, AUTHOR AND ESSAYIST. HE IS BEST KNOWN FOR CREATING EARTHWORM JIM, A CHARACTER THAT SPAWNED A FAMOUS VIDEO GAME, CARTOON SERIES, AND TOY LINE. HE ALSO CREATED THE NEVERHOOD, A TRUE CULT CLASSIC VIDEO GAME. HIS NEWEST WORKS INCLUDE RATFIST AND NNEWTS.
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